Village of Voorheesville Centennial Celebration

(1899-1999)

Historic Walk Guidebook

Souvenir Edition

May 29, 1999

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Cover photograph of Voorheesville
station and New York Central train
by Jim Shaughnessy

Preface

Off and on for nearly 15 years I have conducted historic walking tours through our Village for both fourth grade students and adults in our community. I have always been impressed with the degree of enthusiasm young and old alike show for the past of our town. Sometimes I think it must be equal to the enthusiasm they have for their own family histories.

As a local historian, this state of affairs makes me very happy because, long before I was appointed historian for our Village, I believed our roots exist certainly in the places we have come from but also and especially in the place where we live at present. When we dig in where we are, we become the creators of our history and are generally happier people.

This year of 1999, as we know, is our 100th birthday. Our Centennial Committee has prepared a wonderful celebration for us all to share in. Indeed, some members of this committee have approached the task assigned them with the care someone might show for a family member about to graduate from high school or even marry. For that we can be truly thankful.

We can also be thankful for the rich cultural heritage that exists in this Village. Some of us might see this heritage reflected only in the historic roadside markers along our Village streets or in the sometimes long waits we experience at the railroad crossings when seemingly endless freights pass by. But these reminders, the trains especially, point to our historic and cultural uniqueness in that we are not the result of suburban sprawl. We exhibit many of the characteristics of a suburban community but we are different; we have a rural quality and a small town quality as well. When we stop to consider it, every road that leads to the Village passes through rural lands before it reaches us. That's because we sprung up around the railroad and are still its child.

In this walking tour guide, I have listed some of the highlights of our Village from days gone by and provided a short description of what makes each noteworthy. It is a limited selection to be sure but, should anyone desire more, he or she can go to the nearly 200-page book I put together on our village a decade ago, *Voorheesville, New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town*.

With this little guide in hand, you can make the entire historic walk in about an hour. On a sunny spring or autumn afternoon,

going alone, or especially with one or two friends, from site to site is a most enjoyable way to spend one's time. After each tour I have been part of, I have always felt closer to the people in our community, more rooted.

I would like to thank Mayor Edward Clark and all the Trustees for their exemplary support of my activities as Village Historian over the years. Without their interest, my job would not have been the fun it has been and continues to be. With them, I wish everyone who lives in the Village and those who are here to visit during our celebration, a Happy Hundredth Birthday. Enjoy your walk into history!

Dennis Sullivan,
Village Historian

1 First Fire House

(29 Voorheesville Avenue; Village Hall)

Voorheesville's first fire department was established in 1902. Called Voorheesville Hose Company No. 1, its first crew ranged in number from 15 to 25. For years, the department housed their horse and cart in one building and their ladders in a barn, and had their quarters in yet a third building, a rented space above the Odd Fellow's Lodge. Such fragmentation eventually resulted in the construction of a firehouse in 1911 next to the Odd Fellows Lodge. In 1936, the department would organize its first first-aid unit.

2 Earliest Public Library

(29 Voorheesville Avenue; Village Hall)

E. Dayton Joslin of Joslin's Hardware on Main Street was responsible for bringing the first library to the village in the form of the State Circulating Library. This would be run out of the rear of Albert Borst's restaurant near the depot. But, in 1915, after a new free library was formed, the books were moved to second floor of the firehouse along with the Voorheesville Savings and Loan Association. Just one year after its opening, the trustees announced that over 700 books were available to Village residents in addition to those available from the State Library. At the end of its fourth year, the Library Association had built its collection to 1,437 volumes and had a list of 406 regular borrowers.

Jane Salvatore (left), head librarian, and colleague Betty Shufelt stand in front of the Voorheesville Library at 32 South Main Street about 1948. This was the library's second location. When its holdings grew, the library moved across the street to the former Presbyterian Church.

3 The Telephone Exchange

(19 Voorheesville Avenue)

In September 1895, the first phone line was brought to the village. Then, in April 1917, telephone central, which was formerly located in Clarksville, was moved to the small building on Voorheesville Avenue. Mrs. Emily Ward was put in charge of the switchboard, thus connecting village residents with the rest of the world. Just imagine the conversations!

David Bradt (seated) with wife, Lucretia, to his immediate right and daughter Catherine Goodfellow lived in the oldest house in the Village. Catherine's husband, James (standing) was the Village's first water commissioner. The front portion of the house was added in 1892 when the entire house was Victorianized. The house is located at 14 Voorheesville Avenue.

4 Oldest House in Original Village

(14 Voorheesville Avenue)

In most nineteenth-century pictures of this house (above), it looks very much like other Victorian houses of the era with its porch and gingerbread patterns. That's because the house was Victorianized by the Bradt family in 1892. The original house dates back to about 1810 when it served the family of Joseph and Eleanor Doolittle. They were most likely part of the growing settlement of English in the area who had made their way from Connecticut and Massachusetts toward the end of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century.

5 Methodist Church Parsonage

(8 Voorheesville Avenue)

In response to the Methodist Church's need for housing for its married preachers and to the presence of the new Presbyterian Church on South Main Street, the Board of Directors of the Methodist Church called a meeting on Oct. 6, 1887 to consider the possibility of building a parsonage in the heart of the Village. Despite some disagreement as to the exact spot where this residence should be built, it was finally decided that it would be erected on a parcel of land donated to the church by David Bradt. By the winter of 1887, the new parsonage on Voorheesville Avenue (or Kills Road) was finished and ready for use. Rev. John C. Fisher, who served the church from 1891-1895, was the first minister to live there. Sadly, the Fisher family lost a child to the scarlet fever threat that came upon the Village in 1893.

6 First United Methodist Church

(68 Maple Avenue)

Around 1815, a small settlement of farmers established a Methodist Church in Voorheesville but, at that time the Village and Town of New Scotland were still Bethlehem. Because of its location along the Black Creek, the new church was called the Black Creek Methodist Society. The handful of believers were served by a circuit riding preacher who made his rounds every few months, and quarterly meetings were held in the homes and barns of church members. It is believed that the first church building was built around 1826. This building was moved to its present location on Maple Avenue in 1890. As timbers were being disassembled and reassembled during the move, one of the church members, Isaac Van Auken, was struck by a falling timber and killed. Sadly for the congregation, the first service held in the new church was Mr. Van Auken's funeral. In years to come, the social hall of the new church would serve as a central meeting place for residents of the community of all denominations. The event might be an ice cream social, a vaudeville-type show put on by a travelling entertainer, or the annual meeting of a countywide teachers association.

7 Grist Mill and Carding Machine

(62 Maple Avenue; Vly Creek; see Historic Marker)

A grist mill owned and operated by Coenradt Coens was in full operation along the Vly Creek at this site as early as 1787. Toward the early part of the eighteenth century, the mill was leased to Uzziah Conger who transformed the operation into a carding mill. When George Howell and Jonathan Tenney published their *Bi-Centennial History of Albany* in 1886, they remarked that "There are some vestiges of Uziah Conger's saw and gristmill, which was upon the Vly Kill, near Mrs. James McElroy's, and a few are still living who remember the carding mill at the same place."

8 Village Bakery

(77 Maple Avenue)

In the winter of 1894, Theophilus Civil (aka Orf) White opened the first bakery in the Village. Because his house was not large enough to accommodate an oven, the bakery's oven was set up in the basement of Ed O'Brien's house next door (79 Maple Avenue). White hired a baker from Albany and his new venture was soon underway. His sons, Ira and John, would load the freshly-baked bread into wicker-type baskets and deliver it door to door in the Village. Assuredly, Village residents thought it every bit as good as Wright's Celebrated Bread of Clarksville.

9 Terwilliger/Severson Farm

(Salem Hills)

The land that comprises Salem Hills today was once apple orchards and a dairy farm. In one era, the waters of the Vly that ran through the farm were used to power a grist mill, in another during winter they were used to make ice, and in the early part of this century they were dammed for boating and swimming. There is good evidence to believe that the Terwilliger family, which first owned the farm, settled in these parts during the mid-eighteenth century and are probably our first settlers. The Terwilligers turned over the farm to the Severson family in early part of this century. The Severson dairy was the main source of milk for Village residents for decades.

10 The Voorheesville Grange
(86 Maple Avenue)

In the 1870s, Joseph Hilton, whose farm was nationally recognized for its Devon cattle, helped organize a chapter of the Grange in New Scotland. This farmer advocacy group sought to better the working conditions and social life of farm families. Though the Grange's Patrons of Husbandry was a so-called secret society, such as the Masons and Odd Fellows, both men and women were allowed to join. The Voorheesville Grange was established around the turn of the century. Several decades later, the bottom floor of the building was made into an annex classroom for students in the elementary school.

Ice Harvesting

Of course, ice was essential for preserving foods in the nineteenth century and earlier. There were several ice houses in Voorheesville one of which was located behind the Presbyterian Church on South Main Street. LaGrange's Pond, the Black Creek, the Vly, and Tygert's pond in Guilderland (and later the Vly Reservoir) were valued sites for ice harvesting. Blocks of ice, sometimes as thick as 16" and weighing as much as 300 lbs. were cut by hand with a saw. Later, the saw would be driven by a steam engine drawn along by a team of horses. The blocks of ice were loaded onto a flat sleigh and delivered to the double-walled ice houses situated throughout the village.

11 Bay View Club
(81 Maple Avenue)

In 1904, May Daring, the wife of the first Village Clerk and attorney Stephen Daring, started a chapter of the Bay View Club in her home. This club, which had its national headquarters in Detroit, Michigan, was a cultural study group and clearly the most intellectual social organization in the Village. With May Daring as its president, the group held its first meeting on October 11, 1904 . Meeting each month in various homes, club members discussed esoteric topics such as Russian culture. Each member of the group was required to prepare a short paper on some aspect of the month's scheduled topic and be prepared to share its contents with fellow members.

12 West End Hotel

(112 Maple Avenue; Smith's Tavern)

By the 1890s, the Village had three major hotels in operation one of which was Oliver's West End Hotel located on Maple Avenue. Food and spirituous beverages were sold here, but this establishment did not offer the range of social activities provided by either the Grove Hotel or the Harris House. The West End Hotel was later known as the Brook View Hotel and eventually became the home of Smith's Tavern known far and wide for its pizza and conviviality.

13 First Post Office, 1868

(21 Voorheesville-Altamont Road; see Historic Marker)

Originally a tavern, in 1860 this building was converted to a general store that would later house Voorheesville's first post office. James A. Reid Jr., the son of the town's first supervisor, would serve as the first postmaster from 1868 to 1874. He was followed by Conrad Fryer, the builder and owner of the Grove Hotel, who moved the post office to his hotel. In July 1, 1901, rural delivery services began for those outside the incorporated village which included anyone whose house was situated more than 80 rods from the post office. The mail was delivered only to those who had set up boxes along what was at one time the old stage route.

14 New Scotland School # 10

(Vly Creek)

There is good evidence to believe that a one-room school existed on the site of the present elementary school as early as 1821. In 1892, there was a move to change the "common" school district to a union free school but the plan was defeated by a vote of 31-5. Later a Union Free School was formed followed by a central school in 1941. The voters of the district were given a choice of names for the new district: Helderberg Central School, Voorheesville Central School, Indian Ladder School, or Guilderland Central School. It goes without saying what the results of the election were.

15 Odd Fellows Hall

(31 Voorheesville Avenue; American Legion Post # 1493)

The Independent Order of the Odd Fellows Lodge was established in 1893 by noted Village tapster Morris Harris. Initially the Odd Fellows rented space above Leroy Schell's store and later Gilbert's feed and grain located on lower South Main Street. In 1909, the foundation for the new Lodge was begun. Here many different community organizations came to utilize its social room. Its spaces were used for firehouse meetings, talent shows, movies, dances, concerts, high school graduations, and political meetings on topics such as women's suffrage. Today the building houses American Legion Post #1493.

16 Barrel Factory

(In Lot Between Post Office and New York Central tracks)

Conrad Fryer, besides farming two farms and running the famed Grove Hotel, sponsored many businesses in buildings behind the hotel and in a large brick building erected next to the hotel in 1892. At one time Fryer had six coopers working for him making barrels. Most likely these barrels were the large wood-banded types used to cart produce such as melons, potatoes, and apples. Later John Giffin purchased machinery to start a barrel factory between the Post Office and the New York Central tracks. In October 1907, three coopers were turning out 1,200-1,400 barrels a week on this site.

An overview of the Village from High (Pleasant) Street during the mid-twentieth century.

17 Cummings Bros. Stone Business

(Voorheesville Avenue Along D&H Tracks)

James & John Cummings, sons of an Irish immigrant, established a bluestone business in Voorheesville while still in their mid-twenties. By August 1885, a derrick had been erected at the junction of the two railroads for unloading the bluestone that quarrymen hauled by horse and wagon from Reidsville to be shipped by rail to distant parts of the region.

18 Phoenix Foundry

(Pine St. & Voorheesville Ave.)

In addition to the much larger Albany Malleable Iron Company, later to become the Albany Castings Co., there was a second foundry in the Village called the Phoenix Foundry Company. This foundry, whose foundation is still visible, was situated along the Delaware and Hudson tracks on Pine Street. The Phoenix made architectural castings, soft and light bench castings, and heavy machinery castings. In October 1916, the foundry burned to the ground.

The Empire Cider and Vinegar Works was established in 1890. A mill produced cider and vinegar products on this site for nearly 70 years.

19 Cider and Vinegar Company

(Grove Street and Voorheesville Avenue)

In 1890, a cider and vinegar company was established by Burton and Cory on the grounds of the village gravel pit (Grove Street) and was considered to be an asset by many. It was a successful business employing many men and soon required several expansions. Originally the cider makers offered from $2 to $2.50 per barrel of apples and produced in their first year of production 9,000 gallons of cider per day. The business switched hands on several occasions finally becoming the Duffy-Mott Company, a subsidiary of the famed Mott Company of Rochester. The Voorheesville plant was enlarged thus making it one of the largest cider and vinegar plants in the northeast. By 1950, it employed over 200 people on a regular basis, processing as many as 30 million pounds of apples a year as well as several carloads of prunes. By the time the plant's doors closed in 1956, it was known to have produced apple juice, prune juice, cider vinegar, apple sauce, evaporated apples, jellies, jams, and marmalade.

Ferguson Cider Mill

(Voorheesville Avenue and State Farm Road)

The first cider mill to come to Voorheesville was owned by the Ferguson family who lived on their farm since 1812. In 1865, they erected a new cider and vinegar mill equipped with more efficient equipment so we know they were making cider before the Civil War. The Fergusons not only sold their cider locally but traveled to a number of state fairs to sell it as well. In the late 1880s, they traveled as far away as New Jersey and Maryland introducing fairgoers to Voorheesville's best sparkling Baldwin cider. The Fergusons were also gifted pomologists raising and selling from their farm apple, pear, peach, and Japanese plum seedlings. At the 1894 State Fair, William Ferguson received first prize for a marketing display of his orchard's apples and for 10 different varieties of apples as well as blue ribbons for his Swars, Canada Reds, Oxnobles, Willow Twigs, and York Pipins. In 1913, following the death of William Ferguson, the farm was bought by Vites Mead who produced cherries, pears, and melons on the farm.

20 Grove Hotel

(Grove Street; see Historic Marker)

Conrad "Coon" Fryer, who served as Village postmaster beginning in 1874 and who was influential in setting up the early school system, was the builder and owner of the Grove Hotel. Built in the mid-1870s, the Grove was the biggest and best known of the three hotels in the village at the time. It got its name from the beautifully-kept grove situated in the back which was open to the public free of charge for various social events. In the grove there was a spacious dancing floor, a bandstand and swings for young and old alike. Later, there would also be a tennis court as well as lawn golf and polo. In another part of the grove, there was a track for racing horses and a diamond for baseball games that occasionally drew as many as 500 people. The social hall inside sported many famous vaudeville-type acts that included the likes of Madame Celeste, doing her bird and musical instrumentations, and Doctor Gray's Wonderful Wonders. Crowds came from all parts of the county to be part of the grove's picnics and holiday celebrations sometimes numbering as many as 4,000.

21 Voorheesville Depot

(Intersection of D&H and New York Central Tracks)

The original Voorheesville Depot was built in 1864 and was considered small at best. As one can imagine, given the popularity of Voorheesville as a vacation spot and the amount of freight traveling through, a larger depot and freight station eventually became a topic of concern. In 1889, a slightly larger depot was built for $3217.32, a sum that would be divided evenly by the two railroads using the facility. The station was referred to as "Union Depot" by many because it stood at the junction of the two roads. When the old station was dismantled, Thomas Bewsher, the village hardwareman, bought it for $128 and within weeks had set it up behind his hardware store as a storage shed for supplies. All who have seen the new station that lasted for nearly eighty years, in person or through a photograph, have always marveled at the beauty of its steepled roof. Indeed, the station fronted the cover of a national train calendar for 1999 distributed by Kalmback Publishing Company of Wisconsin.

22 Albany Castings Company
(Foundry Road)

In 1908, Frederick Griesman of Albany began work on the foundation for a new foundry in the Village called the Albany Malleable Iron Company. To attract a crew of knowledgeable founders, Griesman built a series of 10 identical houses on the west side of North Main Street for their use. The foundry produced castings for automatic steel bumpers for dangerous highway curves and brake shoes for the railroad among other items. Around 1936, the foundry came under the ownership of Henry "Pop" Blumenaeur who called his new enterprise the Albany Castings Company. During his ownership the company provided employment for as many as 200 workers from in and around the Village. It should be mentioned that Frederick Griesman was not only instrumental in starting the first foundry in the Village but also the first bank, the Voorheesville Savings and Loan Association. He was also one of the inspirations behind the development of the first public library in the Village.

23 Canning Factory
(Between North Main Street and Foundry Road)

The enterprising acumen of the Village's businessmen was probably never more evident than when they banded together to form the Voorheesville Canning and Preserving Company in February 1897. In this factory, later known as the Hudson Valley Canning Company, crews processed apples and tomatoes that were shipped to many points including New York City. In the first fall of operation, the factory produced about 14,000 cans of goods. Accounts show that peelers were paid three cents a box, each box holding nearly a bushel of apples. Women and girls were paid 25 cents per hundred pounds of apples to quarter, pare remaining peelings, and cut out bad spots. They were able to make between fifty cents and a dollar a day. In 1899, the factory produced about 4,000 cans per day. It is uncertain how long the cannery lasted but in July 1904 , F. W. Bird of Plainsfield leased the building with the intention of starting a creamery. The following year his dairy products were making their way not only into Village homes but also into those of Albany and Schenectady.

24 Voorhees House
(4 Prospect Street; see Historic Marker)

This house which sits atop the hill overlooking the railroad junction was built by Alonzo B. Voorhees around 1867. Mrs. Mahula Hoes ran a boarding house there from 1879 to 1894 which attracted many well-to-do Albanians. Guests enjoyed the house not only for its amenities but also because it was close to the station allowing them to travel back and forth to the city during the day for work.

25 "Orf" White's Ice Cream Parlor
(2 Prospect Street)

On warm summer days, villagers would flock to the ice cream stand at Borst's Restaurant to taste his homemade frozen delights. In the spring of 1900, Borst opened what seems to have been a second ice cream parlor in one of the small rooms of the Joslin flat iron building adjoining the hardware store. About the same time, T. C. "Orf" White opened a soda fountain store next to the Harris House and in 1902 was running two ice cream parlors in the Village. White, who also started the first bakery in the Village, kept his ice cream and soda fountain store next to the Harris House until his death in the early 1930s.

26 Harris House
(1 South Main Street)

Previously a grocery store owned by William Matthias, the Harris House was established in 1889 by Morris Harris, a one-time cigar maker and traveling liquor salesman in Albany County. The hotel was to become the second in the Village. Actually Harris had learned the hotel trade by running the Grove Hotel located just across the tracks several years earlier. The Harris House served as one of the town's courtrooms, for which Harris was paid a small stipend by the town of about $15 annually. This fine food restaurant and drinkery was also used as a gathering place for political conventions and agricultural organizational meetings and was known for sports, music, and vaudeville-type entertainment. In addition to the restaurant, there were 10 rooms upstairs for rent and a livery stable in the rear where guests could hire a horse and buggy for day trips into the Helderbergs.

27 Freight House
(Along the siding of New York Central tracks)

The new depot that was built in 1890 was a wonderful piece of architecture but it had no separate accommodations for freight. This soon became a matter of contention among the business community so that, in May of 1897, a petition was sent to the West Shore RR pleading for a storage building. The resulting wooden structure, built near the depot and just north of the Joslin Brothers Hardware store, still stands today.

28 Al Borst's Restaurant
(Near Depot)

In 1892, Al Borst, a man who had previously studied to become a doctor, leased property from the railroad and opened the first restaurant in the Village. Located near the depot--the precise site is unknown--it provided travelers with quick and less elaborate food than the fare at the hotels. Travelers and residents alike rejoiced in 1896 when Borst's Restaurant was revamped and Mr. Borst announced he was now prepared to offer lunch...and at all hours of the day!

29 Swift/Ricci Grocery Store
(5 South Main Street)

It might be hard to believe now but, at one time, there were four grocery stores operating simultaneously in the Village. One of the earliest was a store built by William Swift, which was taken over by his father-in-law, John Wands in 1888. Wands added a small shoe department with the latest styles for men, women, and children and a selection of dry goods. After the store went through several other owners, Charles Ricci opened a meat market and grocery store in the building in 1922. The Ricci family owned and operated this store until it was closed on the last day of December, 1987. Even toward the end, it was a place where one could come and sit and talk for a while as Village resident Phil Pettinger did nearly every day of his later life. In operation for over a 100 years as a grocery store, this store was the longest continuously-running business in Voorheesville.

30 Joslin Hardware Store
(8 South Main Street)

Tom Bewsher, who also served as the local tinsmith, was the first to open a hardware store in the Village, around 1880. A decade later, E. Dayton Joslin and his brother, Jesse, bought the store. The brothers also sold coal and the store served as a post office. E. Dayton Joslin is remembered for being a teacher, principal, and school board member in the Voorheesville school district, New Scotland School # 10.

Jesse and E. Dayton Joslin stand in front of their South Main Street hardware store, which also served as a post office, about 1890. Their first sale was for the nails used to make the cider mill of Burton and Cory on Grove Street.

31 Shirt and Collar Manufacturing
(8 South Main Street)

The making of shirts was part of Village life as early as 1889 when Lucien Haight rented the upper floor of Rufus Flansburgh's new store on upper South Main Street. Haight had seven women in his employ. About 1893, Village women were employed doing piecework making by hand buttonholes in collars. These would arrive early each day by train and completed work would be shipped back in the evening. The upper floor of Joslin's Hardware Store also housed a collar making business at one time run by Lavinia and Hattie Joslin, the wives of the Joslin Brothers. Then, in 1896, the Village saw its first full-fledged shirt factory set up on North Main Street, a business started by a corporation comprised of local businessmen.

32 Voorheesville Creamery
(South Main Street)

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, fresh Jersey milk was selling for 5 cents a quart in the Village. To get their daily delivery, residents left a pail on the porch into which John F. Tygert would ladle milk from one of the large milk cans on his wagon as he went door-to-door through the Village. Storekeepers also bought milk from Tygert. But later, when Tygert opened a butter and milk store in Albany, he announced that his milk products would be supplied by a newly-established creamery in Altamont. An ad from the times tells us the approach businessmen were taking with their potential customers, at least with respect to butter: "We congratulate good housewives who will be relieved from all the drudgery of buttermaking."

GRIST MILL: Oscar Vunck, (in straw hat) and later his son, George, were owners of the grist mill on South Main Street for about half of a century. The Vunck family purchased the mill from John and James Cummings. The mill suffered three major fires, the last of which occurred on March 17, 1957. This setback was too great for the Vunck family to withstand so the mill was never rebuilt.

One of the early Voorheesville basketball teams (circa 1937). In the back row (l-r) are Mike Pafunda (coach), Paul Massey, Harold Zeh, Harold Mead, Bruce Herwig, Donald Spore, Harold Schultz, and Charles Ulion; in the front row (l-r) are Willis Van Cott, Wes Jacobson, and Elmer Boynton.

33 Voorheesville Athletic Association
(South Main Street)

By 1914, basketball had become part of the winter sports life of the Village. A team had been formed under the auspices of the Voorheesville Athletic Association called the Voorheesville All Professional Basket Ball Team. These hoopsters played their first game at the Odd Fellows Hall on November 14, handily defeating the Troy Mystics before an enthusiastic crowd. This is said to have been the first game of basketball ever played in the Village. By 1916, the Athletic Association had built a clubhouse in the Schell block located at the bottom of South Main Street. In its first game at its new home, the Voorheesville five defeated the Crimson Five of Albany 54-11. Late Village resident, Roy Flansburg, was wont to tell that the crowds at these games became so enthusiastic that occasionally a fight broke out. He also related that the floor in the building used for games was not very sturdy so that on one occasion a fan jumped out of the stands only to find himself going partially through the floor. For several years, the Athletic Association sponsored an annual Villagewide field day as they did on September 6, 1915. A program for that event shows that the day included sports, a parade, baseball, band concerts, a clam steam, and dancing.

34 Voorheesville Savings and Loan
(24 South Main Street)

Frederick Griesman, owner of the Albany Foundry, was the major impetus behind the Village's first savings and loan association and the mainstay of that organization for nearly half a century. This fiduciary enterprise, managed by John Guffin, opened its doors for business on May 31, 1913. However, the bank was open only on Saturdays. The first loan made was in the amount of $1,600 to Edward Oliver, a foundry worker, for the purpose of buying three small houses belonging to Peter Bockhouse. In its earliest days, the bank shared space with the library on the second floor of the building that today serves as Village Hall. Later it would move to the Joslin Block on South Main Street where the Post Office had once operated and then to the site at 34 South Main. It was not until 1941 that the bank was finally able to maintain weekday hours.

35 First Undertaker Business
(31 South Main Street)

The first undertaker to open a business in the Village was Charles Lloyd. That was in 1895. An ad for H. B. Lloyd & Son Undertaking stated, among other things, that "30 Years Experience Enables us to conduct Burials In a Most Satisfactory Manner. Embalming and Laying Out Without Extra Charge.....Also repairing and Upholstering furniture." The Lloyd business was taken over by Joseph Bartlett in 1898 and later the Brunk brothers became the village undertakers, maintaining a business in the village for over half a century.

Farlin, New York

Interestingly, in August 27, 1890, the name of the Village was changed to Farlin after Dudley Farlin, the general freight agent of the Delaware and Hudson. While the naming of the village after him could have been a reward for his long years of service, the honor lasted only to August 19, 1892 when the name was changed back to Voorheesville.

36 Presbyterian Church
(37 South Main Street)

A Presbyterian Church existed in the Town of New Scotland since 1787. In 1885, as the population of Voorheesville grew, a group of Village residents petitioned for a church in the Village. Foundation for the new church was laid on High (Pleasant) Street but the following year plans were changed and the church was erected on South Main. Prior to having a church building, worshipers held services in Edward Wormer's house, William Hotaling's wagon house, and in Dr. Fischer Joslin's garage. For many reasons, the congregation dwindled so that on February 2, 1949 the Voorheesville Presbyterian Church disbanded and rejoined its parent church in New Scotland.

Some of the members of the Voorheesville Presbyterian Church who performed in the church's Jubilee Pageant on June 9, 1936.

37 Levi Wood Grocery Store
(41 South Main Street]

Levi Wood, who had served as clerk for the Town of New Scotland, took over the grocery business Rufus Flansburgh had established at the top of South Main Street. He was also one of the Village's inventors having invented and manufactured the "Night Commander Acetylene Gas Lamp" that he made available to his customers. For decades this building also served as a small department store.

38 Albright's Butcher Shop
(43 South Main Street)

Among the earliest butchers serving the village was John Livingston who, at age 19, was listed as a butcher in the 1850 U.S. Census. Livingston opened his own meat and oyster market toward the end of 1885. There were a number of other meat markets that were established some of which were run separately from existing grocery stores. However, some of these markets did not stay in business very long as butchers moved from one location to another. Daniel Albright seems to have enjoyed the greatest longevity in his shop at 43 South Main Street. Henry Bockhouse, the brother of Peter Bockhouse, the Village shoemaker, came to the Village from Troy in the spring of 1899 to open a meat market. He not only ran his store but with his brother purchased a horse and wagon and began peddling meat in the countryside going even as far as New Salem. Later this building served as a pharmacy and ice cream parlor for decades.

39 Saint Matthew's Catholic Church
(Center and Pleasant Street)

Few Catholics lived in Voorheesville at the turn of the century and those who wanted to be part of a religious community attended either the Methodist or Presbyterian Church. But in 1916, the small Catholic community requested that a priest come to Voorheesville to say Mass. In July of that year, Father Michael McCaffrey of Saint Lucy's in Altamont came to say Mass for the first time. The service was held in the Voorheesville Athletic Association on Main Street. That same year, a Catholic Building Fund Association was established. In November, ground had been broken for a new church atop the hill on Center Street. On December 3, the cornerstone was laid and by Christmas 1916, Father McCaffrey was able to say Mass in the new structure for the first time. In its earliest days, Saint Matthew's was comprised of mostly Italian and Polish families and a few Irish. While all parishioners did their part to make the new church a reality, Joseph Willman and his wife Odellia not only helped with construction costs but also donated monies for the new tower, the bell, and the church's first organ. Joseph also served as sexton of the parish which soon consisted of more than 30 families.

Remembrances of Voorheesville in Days Gone By

by

Ken Weidman

Village Historian, Dennis Sullivan, interviewed Mr. Weidman on June 8, 1989 when Mr. Weidman was in his mid-eighties. These are excerpts from Mr. Weidman's random thoughts on life in and around the Village in the early part of this century.

I heard my old man say he came down the Indian Ladder Road with 20 barrels on a hay rig and that he had a "rough lock" on both wheels or the load would push both horses over the bank. For a rough lock they'd put a chain through the wheel where the opening is and then wind it around once and then let it drag on the ground so the wheel won't turn. It's just the same as what they put on a plow on the road with a load onto it.

Why when I went to high school, there were three blacksmiths in Voorheesville. There was Jim Relyea who had a place on Main Street. He lived upstairs and shod horses downstairs. Then there was Abe Relyea who had a shop (he was probably some relation to Jim but I don't know) he had a shop over where the old cider mill was, across the railroad on Grove Street. That's when I was in high school. And then Pomeroy--that's where my folks went--was up on this end of Main Street right next to where the Severson farm (Salem Hills) was. There's a big house and then they built a Grange Hall next to it.

The reason my folks went to Pomeroy was because they got a horse that was hard to shoe--before that they always went to Jim Relyea--he was a gray horse and was awful nervous, and tore the stocks all out. You never seen a horse in stocks of course, it's just a frame with four posts. They lead the horse down and then lead him in and tie his head so he's surrounded by the stocks. Then there's a rail all around and they can move the ones in front and back to squeeze the horse in more. Then when they take the foot away, why they pull it up with a pulley or something or other.

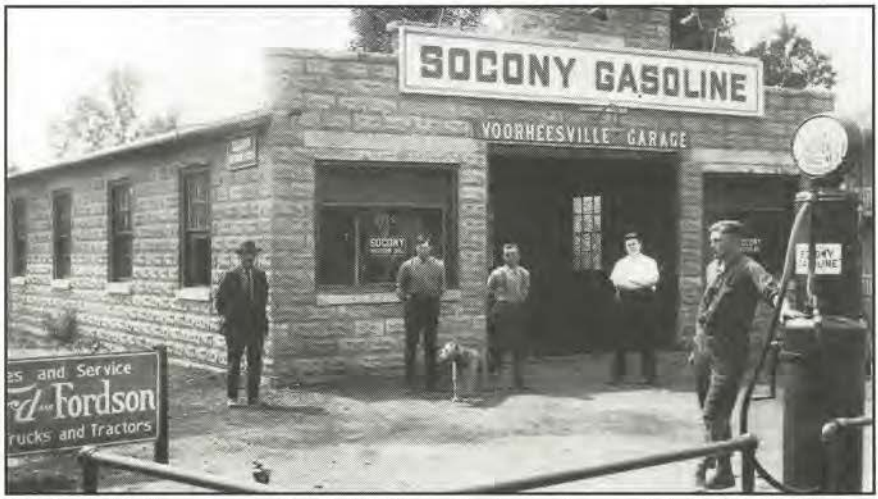
Pomeroy was the only one who had the stocks in the village and who could shoe this horse. That's the reason they transferred from Relyea to Pomeroy. I worked that horse many a day. Of course,

as he got older, you know, he wore out. He died here on the place. Usually the horses wore out after a while but we had horses here 30 years old.

The Grange Hall I mentioned, well that was just a vacant lot when I was small. Then the Grangers got strong enough to build a hall. I imagine some of the Village people were quite interested in it at the time but it was never a very strong organization like it was some places. Of course, it wasn't built until long after the Odd Fellows Hall [current American Legion] was built. That was a hall like they never saw before. But you know, when the Odd Fellows Hall was new, they wouldn't let them play basketball in it. They said it was too rough a game to put in a new building like that.

Where the laundromat is now on South Main Street, well the Joslin Brothers owned a long piece of that and they had a hardware store and a big place where they kept surplus stuff. Over that, that's where they had to play basketball. There was a Voorheesville team. I suppose they called themselves the Athletic Association

The milk business never was very big when I was young as it was later when Phil Severson had it. You see, people who lived in the country all kept a cow in them days. The hired men who worked



Voorheesville Garage owned by Earl Slabom. (L-r) are unknown, John White, Wesley A. Jacobson, unknown, and Earl Slabom.

here had their own cow. Abe Coons peddled one time. He lived over there on the Altamont Road. He had 8 or 9 cows I guess. I can't remember when he peddled but I remember when Jeniski peddled milk in Voorheesville. He came from over there on the road that goes to New Salem; he had the last farm there. He peddled with a surrey, a two-seated wagon with a top on it. He had a horse that would kick, a gray mare, and so he had the front seat taken out and sat in the back and drove so, if the horse got kicking, why she couldn't hit him.

Then Jeniski had a sale one autumn and he brought the horse out. I guess the horse was a good worker and all but everybody knew her in the country. They'd all ask him, "Will she kick?" All Jeniski would say is, "Ah, good horse. Farm. Cultivate. Do anything." That's all they could get out of him. Everybody knew she kicked, that's why he sat in the back seat of the wagon. That was way back at the time I went to high school or a little later.

There used to be different fish peddlers in the summer and in the winter there were sometimes more. That's one thing people used to do in the winter time if they didn't have a job; they went and bought a barrel of fish and, if they had a way to peddle it, they went out through the country and peddled. I guess there weren't so many laws against things like that.

The fellow who worked here, Milford Taylor, that's the way he lived in the winter. We hired him from the first of April to the first of December; the rest of the time he was on his own although he lived in the house and had use of the house. Milford didn't have a horse and he went over to Jeniski's and Jeniski let him have a horse for the winter just for its keep. And Taylor hitches it on to his sleigh, goes to Albany to get a barrel of fish and peddles it, and every week he peddled fish in the country.

As far as the railroad station goes, I remember there was a radiator right in the middle of the station, a big round thing. It was big but it was never very warm in the station. It wasn't very high so you could get over it and stand in the middle of it but you weren't supposed to be in the middle of it.

You know, there was a cooperage in the village. John Giffen had it, the last I knew who did. He used to do a lot of business because there was a lot of apples shipped from here. Nobody had great big orchards but almost everybody's farm had some apples. If you had an apple crop of 30-40 barrels, it paid to sell it.

You could go in the front of the cooperage and be upstairs and you go around in the back and be down one floor, that's the way it was built. The ones that loaded barrels out of there--I don't remember we ever got very many out--were people like Chet Oliver. He did a big business. He was drawing barrels out of there half the summer; he had a hay rigging on his wagon with a rack on it and everytime he came to Voorheesville for anything, he took home a load of barrels. And then when fall came, he had something to move his apple crop in.

The barrels were all wood. The hoops were wood, too. The last feller that made them was--he was the last cooper I remember there--lived in right there where you go in past the old Presbyterian Church on South Main Street. There's a house right in there and then steps you go right up the hill there. I can't remember what his name was. You might have heard it sometime but it wasn't a common name.

Catherine [Weidman, Ken's wife] wants to know if you knew Pete Bockhouse, the shoemaker. I don't know what nationality he was but he was awfully lame. He tapped shoes; I guess as fancy a job as you could get in a lot of places. A lot of people went there and then he built that house up there on the corner of Swift Road right across from the grade school. And I heard somebody say that Pete, after he had it pretty much finished, got down from the roof and said, "It looks like the Kushqua!" The Kushqua was that big hotel atop the Altamont Hill.

NOTES